

we'll go home together. Gipseys very much frightened, too. I thought they meant to kill me; they've taken my pocket-book, but that's no matter.'

'Oh! why didn't I make them give up that?' cried Nina, in much vexation. 'Here, dear, here's your ring, and your belt; they didn't get them. And lest they begin to think we're only two girls all alone, let's turn Gipsy homeward. I can't drive, but I'll keep my arm around you and you'll feel stronger as soon as we're out of this and nearer the village.'

Gipsy's pace was not slow, and before many minutes the girls had reached the gate of the Brinton homestead. The house stood on the crest of a gentle elevation, a knoll thickly shaded by ancient elms, and a flower-bordered path led by a long, winding approach past the porter's lodge to the Squire's door. As they turned through the gates, Nina made a motion to stop the horse.

'I must go home now,' she said.

'Nina Brock, you are going home with me,' Belle replied, positively. 'Have you forgotten that we used to make mud pies together? And to-day you've saved my life. You are going with me to rest and have luncheon and to see my dear father and mother, who will want to thank you.'

'I am not going, Miss Belle. Indeed, indeed, I can't. I must get back to my gloves, that I ought to be sewing on this moment. I don't know what my father will say to me for idling. He'll be angry enough, and as for my step-mother, she'll scold me the rest of the day. Not that I care!' and the dark look that had been absent crept glowering over Nina's face again.

All this time Gipsy's little feet were climbing up the avenue to the terraced levels on which the Brinton home stood, many windowed and gabled. Its verandas were inviting with chairs, and hammocks, and Mrs. Brinton was busy in shade hat and gardening gloves training her roses and vines. She turned and looked at Belle as she drove up, saw her companion and observed Belle's pallor and her disordered dress. Down went her basket in haste and she ran to meet the girls.

'Mother, dearest,' said Belle, 'don't be frightened. Keep Nina Brock. Don't let her run away. I've had an adventure, and Nina came in the very nick of time. She's a heroine, mother. The tramps were afraid of her.'

Through Belle's compassionate and grateful heart darted an idea. What must it be to have such a nature as Nina's, strong and fearless as an eagle's, and to be tied down to sewing in the house of a step-mother! But she said nothing then. Her father was at home, and he helped both girls out, led Nina into the library as a matter of course, and in her hearing dispatched a boy to say where she was, and that she would not be home till dark.

Nina had never been in her life at a table so beautifully appointed as that of Mrs. Brinton. The delicate food, the shining silver, the sparkling cut glass, and the soft-footed servants would at any time have impressed her fancy, but overwrought as she was to-day, they simply rested and refreshed her. She was quite unawed by the respectful butler; she forgot that she was dressed in a cotton frock, without a shred of trimming, and she enjoyed the meal with a zest altogether new in her experience.

Mr. Brinton at once sent out men to scour the woods and fields and telephoned to the nearest railway stations in the hope of discovering and arresting the tramps, but they had too good a start and succeeded in getting safely away with their booty. Belle was forbidden to drive by herself for the present. She was to be escorted by a groom hereafter.

'And I think you might often,' said her father, 'pick up Nina here and take her along for company. Don't say that you have not time, Nina,' he added. 'You will work the better for a little play.'

Nina never forgot the afternoon of that May day. Belle had a large chamber at the top of the house. It was an ideal nest for the idolized daughter of a home, with rugs on a polished floor, a great easy chair or two, a lounge, pictures, books, and a desk filled with paper, envelopes, and every luxurious appliance for correspondence. Before long she found herself chatting with Belle in real confidential girl fashion, not as if they were in different situations in the world, but as two girls together. Nina confessed that the hardness and barrenness of her life had made her bitter, and that she had felt a great deal of jealousy that very day, when she had seen Belle in her carriage, and had herself thought of the drudgery that stretched before her, day in and day out, unrelieved by any break.

'It seemed as if I were in a rut—worse, in a dungeon,' she said, 'and my home is so gloomy. There's never any pleasure there.'

Belle sat very thoughtfully looking up at a picture on the wall. It represented to her an ideal of repose. There was a brown moor, with purple lights where the sunshine tinted the heather. One golden ray fell across a corner of the field, where the path skirted a mountain side. In a windy nook there was the suggestion of a fold, and huddled together were a flock of sheep. Off in the dim distance was the shadowy figure of the shepherd.

'I like that picture, Nina,' she said. 'It makes me think of peace. The peace that is not afraid of storms or a cold blast. Nina, I'm going to ask a favor of you, dear. I want you to let me send you this picture to hang where you can see it every day. You will be tranquillized as you are in the woods. That one ray of bright sunshine, just commonplace sunshine, will be the greatest comfort. And, if you can't love your step-mother—I don't believe I could—maybe the patient shepherd there in the background will show you how to bear with her better. Perhaps he can make you pitiful.'

'Thank you, Miss Belle,' said Nina.

'Belle will do, as it did when we were children, Nina. Don't say Miss Belle any more. And let me tell you that the envy need not be on your side only. I'd give anything in this world to be as brave and strong as you were this morning, and all the girls I know at college admire girls who have acquired some useful art and who know it so well that they can earn money by it. I regard it as splendid to do anything thoroughly—so thoroughly that people will pay you for the doing. As a glove-maker's daughter, I honor a woman who finishes gloves so that they keep up the reputation of the house. There, Nina, that is how I feel.'

The picture went home the next day and made a glory in Nina's living-room. And

somehow a change was wrought in Nina. She did not at once cease to be difficult to herself at times, nor was she very soon angelic in her demeanor to her people at home. The great sculptor who moulds us into beauty and nobility never hurries his work. But bit by bit, little by little, Nina grew different, and now should you visit Hiveton, you might meet a lovely young woman, with a fine, strong face and dark, thoughtful eyes, who would not seem to you the less attractive and fascinating that she spends her days in stitching, stitching, stitching the fingers of gloves that go out to be worn by ladies who never touch a needle. She does not complain nor bewail her lot, nor is she now jealous of Belle Brinton, or of Belle's friends. Her step-mother has become more amiable; her father puffs his black pipe at evening with fewer flings at mankind in general, and Nina, without owning it, has brightened their lives by her cheer and fortitude, just by giving them a ray of commonplace daily sunshine. The Good Shepherd is winning his way into all their hearts.

Some Strange Eggs.

(By Sarah Endicott Ober, in 'Congregationalist'.)

Little Clay Reess lived in Florida, and he had fine times on the beach near his home. One day he was digging in the sand, when up came a queer little object. It was long and narrow, and had a tough shell that bent and dented in Clay's fingers. He could not make out what it was. So he ran to Cinda, his black nurse, and showed it to her. Clinda laughed, and said it was an alligator's egg.

So Clay dug away lustily, and sure enough, up came more eggs with every shovelful of sand. Five times he filled his little bucket and carried them home to his mother, until twenty-five eggs lay in the box she gave him to put them in. That night, when Clay was in his white 'nightie' and having his 'loving time' with his mother, he asked, 'How came the eggs in the sand?'

'The mother 'gator hid them there,' answered his mother, as she rocked and cuddled her little boy.

'Don't the mother 'gator cuddle her eggs like the mother hen does?' asked Clay.

'No, dear, she leaves them in the sand for the hot sun to hatch out.'

'Well, I fink the mother 'gator is a very selfish thing!' cried Clay, sitting up in his indignation.

'Oh, no,' said his mother, smiling. 'That is her way of taking care of them—the way God taught her. She can't cuddle her eggs like the mother hen. She has no soft feathers, and her hard skin would break the eggs if she sat on them. The nice warm sand cuddles them, and the sun helps to hatch them out.'

'Oh,' said Clay, nestling down again. 'Poor mother 'gator! I so sorry for her. How bad she must feel not to cuddle her eggs!'

'She takes good care of them,' said his mother. 'She often comes to look after her babies, and when they hatch out, she finds food for them, and will not let anything hurt them.'

'What would hurt them?' asked Clay, drowsily.

'There are many animals who hunt for the eggs, and I have heard that the father 'gator likes them, too, and eats them all up if he can find them.'

'What an awful bad father!' cried Clay,